

VZCZCXRO9271  
OO RUEHIK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHCP #0991 2051007  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 241007Z JUL 06  
FM AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2605  
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0073  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 1302

UNCLAS COPENHAGEN 000991

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [DA](#)  
SUBJECT: DANISH GOVERNMENT DEFENDS LEBANON POLICY

REF: COPENHAGEN 986

¶1. (SBU) At an extraordinary weekend session of the Danish parliament's foreign policy committee July 22, Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller maintained a firm line against an unconditional cease-fire in Lebanon and signaled Danish government interest in participating in an eventual peacekeeping force there. Responding to center-left and left-wing opposition charges (including that Danish policy has become passive and "militarized"), Moeller rejected any cease-fire that lacks the support of the parties, stating that such a cease-fire "would only mean that Hezbollah would regroup and resume its missile attacks on Israel." Moeller also put responsibility for the conflict squarely with Hezbollah and its supporters, who have "now taken the entire population of Lebanon hostage."

¶2. (SBU) In response to subsequent press accounts (echoing opposition charges) that suggested that the government is siding with the U.S. over the UN, the foreign minister took the unusual step of issuing a press statement July 24, in which he emphasized Danish support for the UN, humanitarian efforts and a political process to end the conflict. At the same time, Moeller's statement emphasized, a cease-fire alone is not enough to resolve the crisis, which can only be solved "when Hamas and Hezbollah are disarmed and recognize Israel's right to exist."

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Although anxious to portray themselves as in step with EU and UN positions, Danish officials have staked out a clear and decisive position on Lebanon that takes into account the real causes of the conflict and its long-term security implications. The Danish government can easily endure the objections of the relatively weak opposition. We can expect that Denmark will continue to be an ally on this issue, perhaps even a contributor to whatever peacekeeping mission may emerge.  
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